

oct-nov

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VIA PACIS



OUR NEW HOUSE

Next time you're passing by Corrie House, check out the house next door. You might see some people you know up on the roof or working out in the yard. Those are Catholic Workers and friends, and the house is one we have bought to use for hospitality.

In a leap of faith (we keep wondering if it was insanity) we decided last month to buy the abandoned house next door to Corrie House. At \$1,000 the price couldn't be beat, so we decided to go ahead and buy it since the need for space seems to be unending. It does need a little work, though!

We opened Corrie House in 1985 as an experiment in doing longer term hospitality, since we had been seeing so many people for whom our 7-10 day stay was no answer. The agreement was that in return for painting and taking care of some minor fixups and assuming taxes and utility payments we were given use of the house. But Corrie House is not and never has been ours, and over the past year the owner has been considering other uses for it. We are convinced of the need for longer term shelter; so we decided that this was the time to buy our own house.

The new house, a two story Victorian, is a grand old wreck like so many of the others which have been torn down around the neighborhood in recent months. It's the kind of house that holds images of the past, the kind that anyone who saw it would want to buy and fix up. To restore and preserve it for the use of the poor makes a lot of sense to us.

estimates that to rehab the house will take 1000 hours and \$17,000. It's a bargain at the price, since we only invested \$1,000 to buy it in the first place, but with our finances the way they always are, \$17,000 is quite a hurdle. Many, many thanks to Drake Newman for the special collection which covered almost half the purchase price of the house!

Needless to say, our needs list for the house alone could fill a page; but foremost without a doubt is money, because we cannot begin serious work until we get some in. So far with the help of friends and guests we've done a lot of work on the exterior of the house, trying to get it ready for the winter and prevent further weather damage. Beyond this, we are at a standstill until we get electricity, which requires the help of a licensed electrician and money for the permit and supplies. We will also need help from a licensed plumber and from anyone who can help with carpentry, drywalling, and painting. At points along the way we will surely appreciate the help of youth groups or work camps for painting or cleanup projects and we especially hope to find individuals who can spend a week, a month or longer with us to work on the house. We also really need tools -- all kinds.

It took two years to rehab Lazarus House. We see the need every day, and we hope and pray to move this along much faster. Special thanks to Bobby Tapp, Eldon Davis, Roberto Bojorquez, and Bobby Swann for your help so far. We hope there will be more people coming soon -- bring your tools and bring your friends!



The bad news is that for years the house has been standing empty, and what remains is just a shell, stripped of all the woodwork, plumbing, wiring and fixtures. Jim

FOOD STORE

With the cold weather coming on, the increasing lines at the Food Store are making us look back wistfully at the warm days of summer when people could spend their money on food instead of heat. Though we had a full house most of the time in terms of guests, business was pleasantly slow at the Food Store much of the summer. Thanks to so many friends we had produce most of the time, with a few loads so huge that our neighbors were able to take enough to put up for the winter. Many thanks to all of you who brought in garden produce (fresh, frozen and canned) for the store and for the house. We are still enjoying some of it! Special thanks to Mark Triplett and family for the corn, to Dennis McLaughlin for the almost weekly loads of vegetables, to the parishes of the Leon region who canned and froze a huge amount of vegetables for the house and brought meat too, to members of St. Ann's in Logan who sent tons of apples, to Al and Mary Razor for bringing bread from Huxley bakery, to Wonder Bread (a mainstay!) and Tait's, and to everyone we have forgotten or whose names we never knew for keeping your hearts on the need of the poor.

MORE THANKS

Special thanks are also due to several churches and groups which have been bringing meals over to the house -- a welcome break from our cooking and menu! Thanks to the folks at Central Presbyterian, Covenant Presbyterian, Faith Lutheran, St. Pius X Knights of Columbus, Urbandale United Church of Christ, and the parishes of the Leon region. We also want to thank members of Our Lady of Immaculate Heart, Drake Newman and Central Presbyterian for collecting food, toiletries, and cleaning supplies.



URGENT FUND APPEAL!

It's been a long time since we had to ask for money -- the response to our appeal when the plumbing lines broke two Thanksgivings ago was so overwhelming that we've been able to take care of the bills without much problem since then, even after the plumbing bill was paid off. But now here we are again with no money, and the winter coming on.

We won't have anything left after the current set of bills is paid off and this newsletter goes out. Utility bills for our four houses are always high, and this year we have the new house to rehab as well. To renovate the house will cost about \$17,000, and we can't really even get started until we are able to get electricity in.

We know that times are hard, and we don't ask for money unless we really need it. Please do what you can.

NEEDS

MONEY
TOOLS
BLANKETS
CLEANING SUPPLIES
FOOD

HELP -- we really need your skills in electrical work, carpentry, plumbing, painting and anything else you know how to do to help us renovate the new house!

PLEASE, please keep us in your prayers as we begin work on our new house. We are always extra busy in the cold months anyway and will be much more so as we try to get the house ready as soon as we can. We ask for your prayers and your help.



NOTES FROM NORMAN

By Norman Searah

Winter is coming back with all of its freezing temperatures, and here I am again, begging for blankets so people won't freeze to death. It's easier for a person to freeze to death than to starve to death. As I remember, there were about five or six people that the media reported of freezing to death across the country, yet there were a lot more deaths that were never reported.

I was happy to hear that a couple of mayors in a couple of large cities ordered their police departments to get people off the streets and get the people to shelters when the weather got to the freezing point. So I'm begging you for blankets.

I'm also begging for Christmas gifts or anything that is still useful as a gift that I can pass out to our guests, to a few families that aren't eligible to get Christmas gifts from the United Way or other charities. To pass out gifts to the guys at Hanson House, Kindred House, to the families that are at the other Kindred House.

This year I want to try to pass out gifts to people that will be travelling on Christmas night whose comfort might be just a cup of coffee at a truck stop. So I'm also begging for Christmas gifts.

I'm still collecting bottles and cans in order to buy a good pickup truck so I can help out more people and to do more around the community.

So if you have some bottles and cans you don't need and you want to help out on the truck, just drop them by the Catholic Worker. If I'm not around, just leave your name and address with the bottles and cans and I'll let you know how I'm doing.

So far I've got close to a thousand dollars saved. I found out that I might need another thousand dollars in order to get a real good truck. A truck that won't break down a lot.

I would like to say Thank you to those who have donated to the truck so far in the last few months:

Marcia Simmons and Doug Maben
Dennis McLaughlin
Hanson House

Paul Fuerst
ABATE of Iowa who donated bottles and cans from their Toys for Tots run

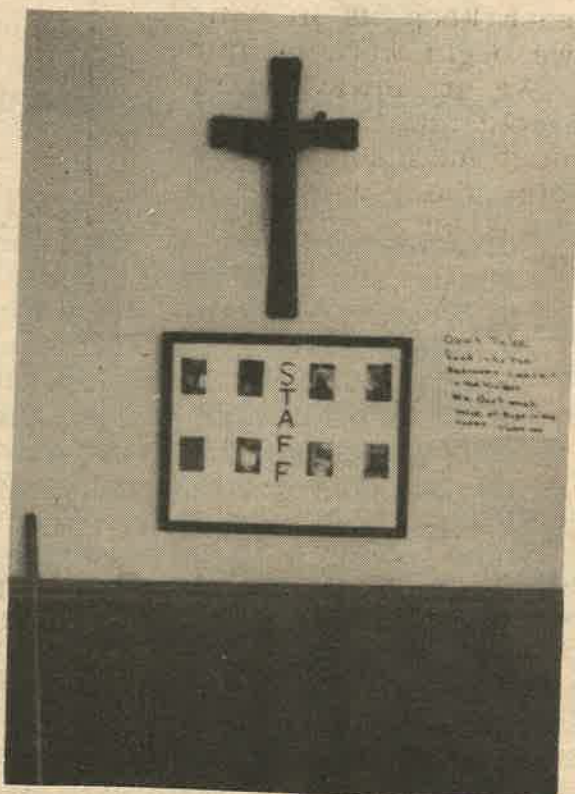
Students of St. Pius X Church
Sister Pat Rigby
and anonymous donor

Thank you.



community

KATIE BOBBITT
LUKE BOBBITT
WENDY BOBBITT
JIM HARRINGTON
PATTI MCKEE
JOHN RUTT
NORMAN SEARAH
MARLA WELLS



Friday nights at 7:30 we have worship at the Catholic Worker House. Please join us!



Several prisoners have written to us hoping to find someone to correspond with. If you are interested in this type of friendship, please write them at these addresses:

Nicholas N. Conner 178 337
P.O. Box 45699
Lucasville, OH 45699-0001

Ovidio Fabre #087164
Starke Florida Prison
P.O. Box 747
Starke Florida, 32091

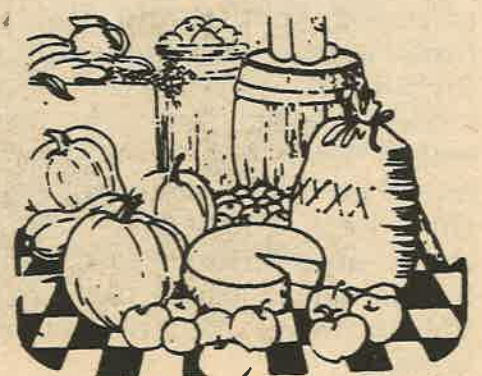
David R. Middleton
A-160721
P.O. Box 779
Marquette, MI 49855

The Peace Resource Center will be holding its annual open house on Sunday, November 15, from 2-5 PM at the Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting House, 4211 Grand Ave. The Peace Resource Center contains over 700 books on various topics related to peace and social justice issues, as well as over 60 films and slide shows addressing these areas.

Many, many thanks to Dean and Susan for all the help in getting this newsletter together. We're getting there!

Photos by Kari Fisher

Nicaraguan president Daniel Ortega will be speaking Nov. 6 at Iowa State University's International Affairs Institute, Ames.



EPIPHANY PLOWSHARES

By Wendy Bobbitt

On November 25, the fourth trial of the Epiphany Plowshares ended in the conviction of the two defendants, Lin Romano and Greg Boertje, on charges of trespass and criminal damage to government property in connection with their disarmament action of January 6. The other two members of the Plowshares group, Frs. Dexter Lancetot and Tom McGann, pleaded guilty shortly before the third trial to the charge of trespass, and were sentenced to 100 days imprisonment and a \$500 fine.

To those who rarely or never have occasion to go to court, it is easy to believe the image of our justice system as one in which true justice is administered. It is a lie which is immediately exposed if you spend any time in an actual courtroom. I spent a lot of time in them in Washington D.C., where I used to go on behalf of homeless people as a third party custodian.

Invariably the courtroom is full of black people, the bench and lawyers' desks with white; jails are the same way. The kinds of charges most of the people are there for include bumming bus transfers (\$25 fine), public intoxic, marijuana possession, etc. Poor people's crimes. You sit for hours through those types of offenses.

Once in DC I saw a couple of police officers beat up a street person for refusing to show an ID on the street. Nine other officers, called for backup, hung around as the others slammed the handcuffed streetperson repeatedly into the visibar on the car and hit him in the head with a blackjack. In court I and several other witnesses described what had happened. Then the officers swore how the streetperson had assaulted them. In the end he was convicted of disorderly conduct and fined \$10.

In the first Epiphany Plowshares trial, Judge Broderick allowed the defendants to present some of the evidence which pertained to the case. They were not allowed to call expert witnesses to testify to US foreign policy in Central America, or to our nuclear crimes, or to International Law, and in fact anything that would have made their action comprehensible was forbidden, but the material evidence, their banners and the leaflet they left at Willow Grove naval air base, were allowed, and they were allowed to talk about their motivations and religious beliefs which forced them to act at Willow Grove. This trial ended in a hung jury.



Apparently Judge Broderick decided between the first and second trials that the evidence he used to think was pertinent wasn't pertinent after all, because in the second trial the defendants were given a gag order precluding them from presenting any of the material evidence, discussing any religious or ethical beliefs, mentioning anything about governmental policies or nuclear weapons, or telling the jury that there was a gag order in effect. Ignoring this order, they were able to get the idea across to the jury that there was more to the case than met the eye, and the second jury refused to convict either.

By the third trial, it was clear that the government would continue to prosecute until they obtained a conviction. The gag order this time was even more restrictive. As a character witness I was to be allowed to address only the question of how law-abiding Lin was, but I wasn't allowed to give any specific examples of anything she ever did. It didn't get to that point anyway -- on the first day of the trial both Lin and Greg were repeatedly cut off for trying to tell the jury what the case was really about, and when spectators stood up and continued what they were trying to get out, and read out their leaflet from the audience, and spoke out about our government's death policies, the prosecution and the judge feared that the jury would be prejudiced in the defendants' favor and the judge declared a mistrial again.

Before the fourth trial, the judge appointed stand-in lawyers to take over when the defendants disobeyed his rule of silence on the real issues, and he tried to close down the courtroom when spectators disturbed the order of the court by supporting them. Even in their opening statements, where a defendant is supposed to be able to talk about anything, silence was the rule: Greg was cut off several times trying to get out his first sentence, and he never got any further than that. Lin and Greg refused from the beginning to talk to the lawyers and when the judge ordered the lawyers to take over, they left the defendants' table, joining the spectators, since in fact they were nothing but spectators anyway. They spent the remainder of the trial there. The courtroom was left open to prevent an appeal by the ACLU on the attempted closing of the courtroom. The interruptions continued.

The progression from a facade of justice to the clear repression of the facts of the case and of the defendants' rights was enough to make anyone want to disrupt the courtroom, and in the third trial when some people turned their backs on the judge and began singing "We Shall Overcome", virtually the whole courtroom joined in and everyone was put out. It made me feel incredibly angry and helpless to sit through that trial, cynical though I thought I already was about the prospects for justice coming out of a courtroom. But what it did, in fact, was the same thing the Epiphany Plowshares did in acting at Willow Grove and forcing us to deal with the reality of our war on Central America and our nuclear death policies: it forced us to see the reality we don't spend any time thinking about until we are confronted by it. The courts are there to serve power and that's all they are going to do unless they are forced to do something else.

Lin and Greg will be sentenced Nov. 17 in Philadelphia. Dexter and Tom are presently serving their 100 day sentence.

All four members of the Epiphany Plowshares group can receive mail at

Jonah House
1933 Park Ave.
Baltimore MD
21217

PLOWSHARES NEWS

TRANSFIGURATION PLOWSHARES (WEST)

The fourth non-violent disarmament of a Minuteman Missile silo took place August 5th in Western Missouri. Jerry Ebner, a member of the Milwaukee Catholic Worker, Joe Gump, father of 12 and husband of Jean Gump, who is serving an 11 year term for the 3rd silo disarmament on Good Friday, 1986, and Helen Woodson, now serving a 12 year sentence for the first silo disarmament in Nov. 1984, acted in a "conspiracy for life" as a sign of restitution and repentance on the anniversary of the atom bombing of Hiroshima.

At 5:15 pm, coinciding with the exact moment the US dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Jerry and Joe locked themselves inside the fenced-in missile silo area, poured their own blood in the shape of a cross on the silo lid, and using sledge hammers beat on tracks used to open the lid, electrical connectors and other apparatus, and cut various electric wires with bolt cutters. With them they carried the statements printed here.

Jerry and Joe were convicted Oct. 22 of conspiracy and destruction of government property. They are out on personal recognizance and expect a sentencing date in late Nov. or early Dec. They are staying at Shalom CW in Kansas City (913)321-2206. Please send correspondence to 635 E. 61st St., Kansas City MO 64110

TRANSFIGURATION PLOWSHARES (EAST)

Also on August 5th, Tom Lewis, Meg Brodheed, and Dan Ethier entered Weymouth Naval base near Boston and disarmed a P-3 Orion aircraft and a Seasprite helicopter. This group also called themselves Transfiguration Plowshares, now designated (East). Although we have no more information about this action, our prayers are with Tom, Meg and Dan.

At this writing, Transfiguration Plowshares (East) have been charged only with misdemeanor trespass. This means they will not have a jury trial. No trial date has been set. Correspondence can be sent to:
136 Austin St.
Worcester, MA 01609

HARMONIC DISARMAMENT FOR LIFE

Project ELF, the Navy's trigger for Trident, Hunter-killer and Poseidon subs, was shut down for 29 hours following an act of direct disarmament by George Ostensen and Helen Woodson on August 16. Several poles were cut and ground communicators damaged and splashed with blood at the submarine communication facility near Clam Lake, WI. George carried with him photos of children, a bible, simple tools and bottles of his own blood.

George is being held at the Ashland County Jail on two counts of state sabotage, carrying a possible 20 years. His trial is set for January 7, 1988. Correspondence can be sent to him at the Ashland County Jail, Ashland WI 54806.

Helen Woodson, co-conspirator in both actions, has not been charged in either case but has been transferred back to Alderson, WV. She asks that correspondence still be sent to the Greenhouse Community, 622 Water St., Ashland WI 54806.



EXCERPT FROM TRANSFIGURATION PLOWSHARES (WEST) STATEMENT

In August, 1945, the United States people were ignorant. Embroiled in a war believed to be necessary and just, they did not know that their cause would end in Hiroshima, in an act of criminal mass murder which would plunge the entire world into a nuclear nightmare. They did not know that the victors would execute German citizens for crimes against humanity while remaining silent on the subject of their own infamy. They did not know that their government would embark upon a systemic building of empire, invading small nations, destabilizing governments, and functioning as a chief cause of poverty and starvation throughout the Third World.

In August, 1987, the United States people are bewildered and mesmerized. While their leaders wax optimistic about arms reductions, the Pentagon parades its latest First-Strike plans -- the modification and improvement of the present nuclear arsenal, the design of a warhead which will burrow into the ground before detonating, and the construction of additional nuclear power plants to produce the plutonium and tritium necessary for weapons already on the drawing board. Our government is quite obviously long on war and very short on truth.

Inaction may have been excusable in 1945, but it is no longer. We must shake off the spell that binds us in silent complicity to the planned destruction of life on earth and accept personal responsibility for disarmament. Each act, however modest, is a statement of the truth which will set us free from the spectre of annihilation.

Through clear, public acts of nonviolent resistance, let us bless each other with the peace that God has bestowed upon us and commanded that we spread throughout the world.

HELEN WOODSON'S STATEMENT (TRANSFIGURATION PLOWSHARES)

When the world faces nuclear destruction, people of peace must join in a conspiracy for life. To conspire (breathe together), to act for life is to bring hope into a suffering world. Hope breaks through prison walls when the body cannot; hope hammers the nuclear idols when the arms cannot; hope pours the blood exposing nuclear death when the hands cannot; hope stands faithful at the silo when the legs cannot. I am honored, privileged and overjoyed to enter into this life-giving conspiracy, to join my hope to the physical and spiritual witness enacted here today.

Let us all choose life that the children may live.

For the Lord alone is your God
No other gods may share the glory
No idols may share the praise
The eyes of the blind shall be opened
And those who dwell in prisons shall be free

Isaiah 42:8-7



EXCERPT FROM GEORGE OSTENSON'S STATEMENT

Our great civilization here in America has rejected Jesus' message and the warnings of the Jewish prophets and we have chosen Death as a society and subsequently rejected the path of Life. We look for security in Technological gods. The old testament prophetic warnings are as clear today as then. In Isaiah's vision Yahweh said to him,

Their land is full of idols;
They worship the works of their hands,
That which their fingers have made.
Is 2:8

This is our society screaming at us. The Pentagon and our governmental leaders constantly are reassuring us about the security provided by these mega-death weapons systems. ELF is one such technological wonder that allows the Trident to maintain First Strike capability. But in reality it is our own death because the weapons we are talking about will kill everything: the children, the old, the poor, the wild and domestic animals and all plant life as well. We have lost all sense of the value of humanity just by considering the use of such weaponry. Each day children starve for lack of basic necessities, while billions are spent on weapons of mass destruction. Innocent blood is being spilt. In disarming this system I spill my blood: God's life force within me. I act in hope because I want to live, and I want all the world to live. We must see this as it really is, not as a technological wonder which will protect us, but as a death device that is killing and hurting us physically, mentally and environmentally right now. This false god is a lie.





THRESHING WHEAT IN A WINE PRESS



"The angel of Yahweh came and sat under the terebinth at Ephrah which belonged to Joash of Abiezer. Gideon his son was threshing wheat inside the winepress to keep it hidden from Midian, when the angel of Yahweh appeared to him and said, "Yahweh is with you, valiant warrior! Gideon answered him, "Forgive me, my lord, but if Yahweh is with us, then why is it that all this is happening to us now? And where are all the wonders our ancestors tell us of when they say, 'Did not Yahweh bring us out of Egypt'? But now Yahweh has deserted us; he has abandoned us to Midian.

At this Yahweh turned to him and said, "Go in the strength now upholding you, and you will rescue Israel from the power of Midian. Do I not send you myself?" Gideon answered him, "Forgive me, my lord, but how can I deliver Israel? My clan, you must know, is weakest in Manasseh and I am the least important in my family."

Judges 6:11-16



A wine-press is not the place to thresh wheat. The whole idea of threshing wheat is that you keep the grain and let the wind take away the chaff. Unlike European wine-presses, the wine-press that Gideon used was a narrow tunnel underground that would carry away the juice.

The scene that Gideon is in would be almost humorous, except that Gideon probably didn't find any of it very funny. He is forced to hide from the dominant society as he performs this life-giving task with utter futility. He's probably swallowing a lot of dirt and the chaff isn't going anywhere; when suddenly the angel of the Lord swoops down. Gideon is in complete disbelief as the angel checks out the scene and says, "Yup. You're the guy I want."

In a similar way I find a modern analogy with the Catholic Worker movement. The following is part-prose, part-poem and part-prayer; a personal look at my last five years in Des Moines (particularly the past two and a half I've spent at the Catholic Worker).

From the top row of Vets Auditorium I heard a voice. It was February 1984 and Ronald Reagan was in town.

The voice, however, did not belong to Reagan, who was momentarily silenced by the outburst. The message was indistinguishable from my perch with other Drake campus newspaper reporters. The voice was the voice of a Catholic Worker.

Although I had not come to pay homage to our president, I was silenced by the law of the status quo. Silenced by the journalist's lie of objectivity -- that only by maintaining a neutral position can one present the truth to the world.

But I was touched. I was touched that one voice and then others could stand in an auditorium full of people chanting "Rea-gun-rea-gun-rea-gun" and challenge them to think.

I was touched as other small single voices stood up to speak. I was touched as I watched a Reaganite pour soda down the head of a protestor holding a banner that said, "Reagan lies."

Now everyone is probably expecting me to talk about how I walked over and held that banner. How I endured the taunts and maybe said to the two women holding the banner, "I agree with you. This is the only sane thing in this room."

But I didn't. I was touched and walked on.

I had no idea that these people were to be some of my closest friends. That I would be a Catholic Worker. That they were Catholic Workers. Or even what a Catholic Worker was.

The Community for Creative Non-Violence. I've only spent a month there. Normally it wouldn't be fair for someone who drops in and out on various trips to pass judgment on CCNV -- how the smell of cat urine was too much, etc. In the shadow of the Capitol, a bag lady approached me for money. I and another person I was with instinctively kept walking; but Mike Sprong (never known for a large bankroll) reached into his pocket, looked the woman in the eyes and said, "No problem".

D.C. -- where the street people are dwarfed by oversized phallic symbols was the first time anyone had ever "panhandled" from me. I was 19.

Easter, 1985, during this visit to D.C., was when I decided I was supposed to be doing hospitality. CCNV is crazy -- Second and D Shelter was then a 1,000 bed housing unit. No matter what anyone says about CCNV, it's a good place filled with good people. The theory then was to bring the outdoors indoors -- to keep people alive. It's the only place I've ever seen that gives people a real option to poverty. It brings people of varied backgrounds -- street people, hoods, college students, and former yuppies -- together in a lifestyle of struggling against poverty.

It is also the hardest place I've ever visited. One need not be well adjusted to serve their sisters and brothers. All too often, however, those finally escaping the cycle of poverty are dragged back into it while trying to help just one more person get out.

I hadn't planned to visit CCNV on this trip. I always feel guilty while I'm there -- mainly because I know I'm not staying. I did help my friend Daryoush cook supper and visited another friend, Jennie.

I don't have a lot of heroines, but I think Jennie has to be one. At 22, she is essentially running the women's shelter. She left college, fed up with the rhetoric and racism to do something with her life.

I know her struggle hasn't been easy. The night we talked her dog had been run over and many women were coming in drunk from the funeral of a friend who had overdosed. Always from her second story room at the shelter there is a constant din; a constant reek of piss and perfume. But I don't think she will regret missing those "carefree college days."

My friend, Lin Romano, recently was found guilty in her fourth Epiphany Plowshares trial. Lin was part of CCNV for 9 years. She left college to go to CCNV and stayed. Lin and Greg Boertje will both be sentenced November 17. They'll be facing 16 years behind bars.

"New York, New York. It's so nice. Gotta even say it twice. New York, New York."

At Ray's Pizza Parlor -- Workers Marion, Carl and I indulge in \$1.20 slices of pizza (mainly because the Worker has been on a lentil soup craze for 3 weeks).

I'd just finished my pizza when one of the white "pizza men" dashed out of the door yelling, "That's him. That's the guy." In the hubbub of pizza men dashing through the door like inner-city Rambos, I learned that an hour earlier a black man had lifted four bucks from the counter.

Carl ran outside, while I sat with Marion listening to the room abuzz with twenty-five Bernard Goetz sound-alikes.

I went outside and drifted through the growing crowd. As usual, black street pedlars lined the East Greenwich Village street.

Pizza/Rambo man was now preoccupied with getting his money back. The black man was preoccupied with protecting his few street wares and his face.

"Fuckin' nigger," the pizza man yelled as he continued to kick the black man in his side.

When the cops arrived, they were quick to take the story of the wronged businessman. Only when a well-dressed white woman said, "That guy has been beat up" would they speak to the black man.

I walked back into the pizza parlor, my stomach aching, and told Marion I needed to go back to the Worker. On the way home fingered into the cement was the message, "STOP RACIST VIOLENCE."

You will see them everywhere -- in the subways, on church steps, in alleys, in front of buildings -- there THEY are. THEY are the homeless.

"The poor will be with you always," Jesus said. I think Jesus was one of the biggest "wheat threshers in a wine press" we've ever had. When he gives us this hopeless message he doesn't give us a license for rampant apathy; instead he refers us to Deut. 15:11 where it says "the poor will be with us always, open your hand wide to your sister and brother". I can't believe that poverty was any less of an issue when Jesus was walking around the Middle East. His gospel message was one of addressing the need we see, as we see it. Not one to be taken lightly; but one to be taken literally.

BREAD AND ROSES is a hymn of the Socialists. I've been a Socialist for three years. It's never been something I've taken lightly; something with which I've had to struggle.

Beautiful gardens dot the desert of skyscrapers and high rises in New York. One evening, following a party, we walked past a New York comrade's garden. Like all other gardens in New York, it was locked up. The wrought iron fences were ten-feet and we were let into the garden. All I could do was sit on a bench in the middle of this garden and think of the Woody Guthrie verse in "This Land is Your Land":

As I went walkin'
I saw a sign there
and this sign said
No trespassing
But on the other side
It didn't say nothin'
That side was made for you and me.

So many times I'd sung this song with these friends. All good people working for radical changes in the system. The hostess sensed my discomfort and explained that people would trash the gardens if they were open. They most likely would. Please forgive us all, Gideon.

My friend Carmen Trotta had a difficult time writing "thank-yous" while he was here. He said we were about justice, not charity. He would quote St. Basil's "The extra coat hanging in your closet belongs to someone else."

On October 16 I'll leave Des Moines for Omaha's St. Anthony's Shelter. There every Wednesday, garbage day, the kids will pick through the garbage to see what looks good. We're talking about starting a food store there.

While I was in New York, Carmen came to spend a day with me in the City. We ended up sitting in a Chinatown park watching little kids chase the pigeons. He was on his way to visit our friend Judith Reeh in Germany and wanted to take along a good book. Any suggestions?

I don't remember the last good book I read. I just finished Joan Baez's second autobiography that a friend loaned me because I didn't have \$18.95 to spend on Joan's confessions.

Both Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin (co-founders of the Catholic Worker) drew from a rich history of literary traditions. I worry often about becoming illiterate; I worry about the lack of analysis in this article.

When my friend Viola died, I thought a lot about who tells her story. How many poor people die with a message; or more importantly, a story that makes us laugh. Bread and Roses.

Meridel LeSeuer spoke at Drake. I was assigned the story and spent the night writing it. I spent the next night drinking iced tea and wondering why I was in college. The newspaper wouldn't print her reference to Hemingway's work as being about "fishin', fightin', and fuckin'." Nothing new. LeSeuer was blacklisted during the '30's. She wrote about women on the breadlines, forced sterilizations, and lobotomies.

Next January, I'll start school again at the writer's workshop at the University of Nebraska-Omaha.

When I left Drake, I couldn't walk across campus without my stomach knotting. It still knots every month when I go to pay my student loan.

After my first summer at the Worker I tried to make up two of my incompletes. All I can remember is sitting through my English Renaissance literature class defending why I thought Spenser's Faerie Queene would be understood at a soup kitchen.

The New York Worker is located in East Greenwich Village, which is being gentrified. A few years ago, you could get a single room occupancy for little money; now

one-bedroom apartments rent for \$1,000/month. You won't walk much more than 15 yards without seeing at least one homeless person. Their spirits are more than broken; they are crushed and trampled by a society that would rather step over their sleeping bodies than take them home for a cup of coffee and a sandwich. Or worse yet, talk to them.

Lord, we are a weak group of people. We are small. In New York, they closed the Catholic Worker soup line for two weeks because they had only three workers. Everywhere I go, I talk with one or two people my age about why there aren't many young people in the Catholic Worker.

My friend, Ted, who sat up many nights with me drinking iced tea as we both agonized over our problems and lack of direction -- has just quit his job with Shell Oil Company to work full-time at the Houston Catholic Worker.

I can't see any answers to the lack of young people (the lack of people in general) doing this work. The easy way out is to say that they're only interested in their MBA's and BMW's.

Being back home in Des Moines both Katie and Luke have decided to like me. The house next door is progressing, although I haven't been able to walk through it yet. It's too sad to think about leaving my new room.

I'll be back at Thanksgiving to help with dinner here with my family. I'm sure I'll be amazed at how many new walls Mercy Properties has put up around the buildings they're acquiring.

This Thanksgiving we'll try to give away turkeys. Last year we passed out 115 of them to folks in the neighborhood. Yet on Thanksgiving Day, people without turkey came to see if we had any more. We could only invite them in for dinner in a wine-press.



By Kari Fisher



A Letter Home

By Donna Henderson

Dear Friends,

I left the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community in January to work at the Christic Institute on a civil lawsuit on behalf of two journalists, Tony Avirgan and Martha Honey, against twenty-nine members of the private Contra arms network. Since I left Des Moines, the names of some of the defendants who are members of this private network have become more widely known because they testified before the Select Committees on the Iran-Contra affair.

The lawsuit characterizes the assassination and arms trafficking, funded by drug smuggling of a private "secret team" as organized crime. The suit, which in accord with a judge's order begins in approximately 1960, traces the roots of the activities to the anti-Castro Cuban-American terrorists of the late 1950's, follows their leadership to the "unconventional warfare" programs of the Southeast Asian conflicts, into Chile and finally Central America, with short-term excursions into the Middle East and Africa. When Anastasio Somoza was cut off from U.S. military aid by the Carter administration for human rights violations, the Secret Team stepped in to assist the dictator with arms and ammunition. The Secret Team provided Somoza's National Guard with weapons and ammunition during their last days in Nicaragua and their first days as rebels. The Secret Team worked with the Reagan administration both before and after the Boland Amendment banned any "direct or indirect" government aid to the Contras.

The defendants who testified before the Select Committees include Richard Secord, Albert Hakim, Robert Owen, John Singlaub and Adolfo Calero. Other defendants who have also received some attention by the Committees and the press are John Hull and Bruce Jones, both American ranchers in Costa Rica who have supported the rebels; Moises Dagoberto Nunez, a Cuban living in Costa Rica who runs a seafood import-export business; and Francisco Chanes, the owner of Ocean Hunter about which the CBS news program West 57th Street focused.

The allegations of the lawsuit stem from the May 30, 1984, bombing of Eden Pastora's press conference in La Penca, Nicaragua, where American reporter for the Tico Times Linda Frazier and two other reporters and five Pastora supporters were killed and seventeen other journalists, including Tony Avirgan, were severely injured. Eden Pastora was a charismatic Sandinista military leader who became disenchanted with the Sandinista government and left Nicaragua to become a leader in the Contra forces. Eden Pastora was the primary Contra leader on the Southern Front (Costa Rica) until other Contra leaders and the CIA determined that he should be cut off from further assistance. Eden Pastora, thirty days prior to the bombing had been given a deadline to ally with the Contra forces of the FDN in Honduras. At the May 30, 1984, press conference, Eden Pastora intended to announce his refusal to join ranks with the Somocista-dominated FDN Contra group.

The suit alleges violations of the Neutrality Act, drug trafficking, illegal transportation of arms and explosives with the knowledge and intent that they be used for the purpose of committing terrorist acts, murder, attempted murder, threats and conspiracy to engage in these and other illegal acts. The lawsuit is filed under an essentially criminal statute called the Racketeering, Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) statute which provides treble money damages for injury to business property and the businesses harmed by organized crime. When the statute was enacted, its broad prosecutorial powers were perceived as substantial threats to civil rights. Designed to allow citizens to become "private attorneys generals", the civil damages section of the statute was perceived to be a method by which the victims of organized crime could civilly prosecute the perpetrators in order to be compensated for their loss. The biggest drawback to the civil damages section of the statute is that, because the purpose of the statute is to protect commerce, personal injury claims are not compensable under the statute. Tony Avirgan's personal injuries from the bombing are filed under a different legal theory. Under the RICO statute, we must prove the defendants engaged at least two racketeering activities within a ten year period of one another, committed the acts which injured the plaintiffs and caused the plaintiffs' loss to business and property.

The lawsuit pits the Christic Institute, a non-profit law and religious policy center, which had all of fifteen employees when I joined in February and now has only forty-five, against some of the most powerful law firms in the country. Twenty-three of the defendants have been served with the complaint. All but a few have employed separate lawfirms and several of the defendants have employed more than one firm. The litigation unit of the Institute has five attorneys at this point, meaning those five are kept very busy with motions and the discovery process.

The discovery process is only now beginning to get into full swing. The process basically includes depositions, sworn testimony before a court reporter in the presence of the attorneys without any judge or magistrate present; requests for admissions, assertions put to a party to the lawsuit asking them to admit or deny the statement; and interrogatories, questions put to a party to the suit to which that party must answer or object.

The Institute anticipates taking approximately 250 depositions before the trial begins. A number of depositions have been taken in Costa Rica and Florida already but the number is small and the witnesses to date have been relatively friendly although sometimes fearful for their lives.

Immediately after the depositions in Costa Rica were taken, the plaintiffs, Tony and Martha, were "set-up" to receive a parcel allegedly from T. Borge containing cocaine. The plaintiffs had been warned that something was going to happen and, at a press conference that very morning announced to the press that they had received a threat. They received a notice that they had a package waiting for them at the post office. Their assistant Carmen went to pick up the package, which had no return address, and without opening it proceeded out the post office door. Five police arrested her, allegedly for a traffic offense, as she left the building. As she rode in the police car to the station, the officers repeatedly reminded her not to forget her package. The officers took her before a judge who opened the package to discover two books, one of which contained a quantity of cocaine. Not even the judge, who released Carmen without charging her, was impressed with the attempt to frame the plaintiffs. That evening the police, without identifying themselves, came to Tony's and Martha's home to search for drugs. The police wanted to search the place alone, but Christic general counsel Danny Sheehan refused fearing the police would plant drugs when they discovered they would find none. Sheehan also insisted that they search each person to prevent the police from claiming the search was somehow inadequate. After the police searched and found nothing, they insisted on jailing Carmen again. As the police started to pull Carmen to the police car, Tom Kellenberg objected and he was arrested. Tom received a blow to the head while being questioned by the police but was otherwise unharmed when he was released the afternoon of the following day. He was tried for disrespect to a police officer, but was found not guilty because the officers had not identified themselves as police. One of the witnesses whose deposition was taken was taken while Christic attorneys were in Costa Rica was arrested, beaten and held for several days while the police questioned him about his testimony and demanded that he recant his statements which he refused to do.

The history of civil damages under the RICO statute shows that the provisions have not been used by persons injured by organized crime, probably because they fear retaliation. The government uses the civil provisions of RICO often to put certain allegedly corrupt organizations out of business. To date, ironically, the most common use of the statute is by one legitimate business suing another for fraud in contractual matters. The Christic Institute suit is the first lawsuit filed by a private person against organized crime. It is the first time the civil section of the RICO statute is being used as it was designed to be used. One of the reasons the government has been able to use the RICO statute so successfully is that the government has expensive witness protection programs which enable witnesses to testify and then disappear. This case will present the trial court with the important question: Will private persons, suing under a statute designed to put them in the position of "attorneys general", be allowed to protect their witnesses in a similar fashion? The witnesses to the crimes of the defendants in the Contragate scandal have been threatened, beaten, jailed and even killed. Looking beyond Contragate the legal question (and don't legal questions look pale in view of the suit's allegations?) remains: will the statute ever be able to fulfill its purpose without providing protections to civil trial witnesses. Protecting the witnesses is a major consideration in this law suit.

The evening I arrived in D.C. the lawyers and staff were celebrating a major victory. The defendants had made a serious attempt to dismiss the case on the basis that the suit failed to state a "cause of action", meaning even if the plaintiffs were injured by the defendants actions RICO was an inappropriate statute by which the court could recompense the plaintiffs. The judge found the RICO statute to be an appropriate remedy and granted us permission to examine the defendants on events as far back as 1960, which includes many of the activities of the anti-Castro Cuban-American terrorists. In short, it put the Institute's legal team right where it wanted to be in order to fully examine the activities of the Secret Team since 1960.

Although when I first arrived, the Institute needed me to write motions and pleadings, we have since hired two attorneys for that task. My place in this process is with the documents and "real" evidence, as opposed to testimonial evidence. I receive documents and other pieces of evidence from the attorneys and investigators, assist in determining what additional evidence we need to prove various elements of the suit, and provide the attorneys taking depositions with the proof and evidence we already have collected. We will be working with a select group of the nation's top trial attorneys to complete the approximately 250 depositions before trial.

We anticipate the trial to take place next summer. We have alot of work to do in the meantime.

Pax,

Donna Jean

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Ha llegado el tiempo de marchar juntos por la Paz ©1985 MAURO HECK

HOMELESSNESS: ORIGINS OF A CATHOLIC WORKER POSITION

By J.R. Rutt

Recently our community was asked to speak on homelessness at the State Fair, and I volunteered to go. My main contribution to the discussion was to review one of the Catholic Worker movement's positions on one of many ways to approach the problem of homelessness.

Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin were the founders of the Catholic Worker movement. Dorothy Day had been an activist in movements as diverse as the Suffragettes (getting women in America the legal right to vote) to, later in life, nuclear disarmament, and many other social justice issues. Peter Maurin, a French philosopher and former member of a French Catholic teaching order (the Christian Brothers), contributed to the formation, along with Dorothy Day and others, of the philosophical/theological foundations of the Catholic Worker movement.

One of Peter Maurin's main suggestions on how to deal with the problem of homelessness was this: he suggested, when well-meaning, practising Catholics and Christians (and sometimes, even people of no particular Church!) would ask him, often in a frustrated tone of voice, "What can one person (or family) do to help solve the problem of homelessness?", that every family or individual set aside an empty or spare room in their home or apartment, to be furnished simply and used to offer hospitality to a person who for now is homeless and needs a bed to sleep in and a roof over their head. Peter Maurin said that every time a person came through the doors of their first House of Hospitality in New York City, he viewed that stranger as Christ. After all, as a child, Christ and his Mother and Foster-Father (St. Joseph) had to flee Nazareth and go, as refugees and foreigners, down to Egypt, fleeing Herod's slaughter of the Holy Innocents. So Christ understands the plight of the homeless from personal experience.

In pre-Vatican II days, many sermons were given on the topic of the Corporal Works of Mercy: physically doing something for someone, as per Christ's commands: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and so on. Prayer is very important, but, as St. Paul says in the New Testament, "Prayers without works are dead."

This idea of looking for and seeing the Face of Christ in the stranger's at your door is, in the history of Christianity, a very old idea. In biblical terms, one can see that as long ago as Abraham, one of Christianity's Fathers in Faith, Abraham treated the Angel, God's Messenger, as an honored guest, even though, or perhaps specifically because, the Angel was a stranger.

I know that to many people this suggestion of Peter Maurin's will on first thought appear very radical. I, myself, was quite surprised when I first heard of it. But if you think about it, the possibility of actually offering hospitality, one on one, to another person who, for now, is without a home, is, to me at least, a very attractive idea.

If, for whatever reason, you don't feel able to do this in your home, you might want to consider the solution used in several different churches here in Des Moines. Several families in one parish join together, pooling their resources, time and efforts to jointly rent either a small house or an apartment. They furnish this house/apartment simply; then, through one of several local agencies, have people referred to them who are homeless.

These homeless families are given a place to live, usually on a short-term basis, and are also given help by the different individuals in the host families: some people work as volunteer advocates, that is, driving them to appointments at social agencies to help them apply for public assistance, medical benefits, etc. if they are eligible; helping the parents register children in school; helping the person(s) look for and apply for jobs, look for an apartment or house to rent, providing moral support and encouragement, and so on.

If you feel called to this type of outreach, it can be very rewarding. Here in Des Moines, there are at least 8 groups doing this on a continuing basis through their churches. This can also be a great way to build a strong sense of community in your local church and/or parish. Many people find it very satisfying to organize and offer hospitality on a local basis, instead of, or in addition to, donating money so that a national group can provide this service, oftentimes in a large city in a distant part of the country. Doing this locally shows you and maybe others that, yes, there is something one person can do about the problem of homelessness!

HOMELESSNESS CONFERENCE

On Jan. 5-7 the Des Moines Coalition for the Homeless will sponsor a conference entitled "Homelessness in Midwestern Mid-Sized Cities."

A COUNTRY PRIEST'S ADAPTATION OF JER. 20:7-9

By Frank Cordaro

God, you fooled me and I let myself be fooled! You're just too much for me, I fell for all that omnipotent stuff.

Since I've sided with you, I've been put down, called a fool, naive, a dupe for the Communists, an unpatriotic wimp.

Whenever I speak your words it's a scream -- Shelter the Homeless / Save the Family Farm / Feed the Hungry / Starve the Pentagon / Disarm or Dig Graves.

Your Word has done me no good. When I speak it, I get put down. I say to myself, that's it -- no more.

I ain't going to open my mouth again. Who needs it? Let some other sucker take the rap.

I want to be liked. (People really want to like their priest.)

I'll not speak this foolishness again ...

"But then it becomes like fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones; I grow weary holding it in. I can not endure it ..."

I scream -- Shelter the Homeless / Save the Family Farm / Feed the Hungry / Starve the Pentagon / Disarm or Dig Graves.



NEVADA TEST SITE

TO ANNOUNCE THE LIGHT IN PLACES OF DARKNESS

A three day gathering of Catholic Workers and friends to commemorate the 90th birthday of Dorothy Day will be held Nov. 6-7-8 at the Nevada Test Site. The three day event will include an international gathering of Catholic Workers for discussion, presentations, prayer, and parties on Friday, a gathering on Saturday for speakers, presentations, nonviolence training, and celebration, and on Sunday, mass, prayer vigil, and nonviolent civil disobedience at the Nuclear Test Site.

For further information:
NY Catholic Worker (212) 254-1640
Las Vegas CW (702) 647-0728
Nevad Desert Experience (702) 646-4814
LA Catholic Worker (213) 267-8789



HELPING OUT THE RICH

By Wendy Bobbitt

At this writing it appears that the Legislature will be meeting in Special Session to approve the Governor's plan to use a supposed surplus in state revenues to fund a change in the state tax structure to provide tax relief to the wealthiest citizens in the state. This plan, which has gone unchallenged by legislative leaders and the media, represents a total desertion of the poor from whom this money was stolen earlier this year.

This Spring, Governor Branstad vetoed a number of programs benefiting the poor and handicapped, claiming that the budget passed by the Legislature was out of balance and would create a 35 million dollar deficit. Rather than cutting all programs across the board to make up the deficit he claimed existed, Governor Branstad chose to cut almost exclusively those which serve the poor and handicapped, on which their well-being, indeed their lives, depend.

Although Governor Branstad's loyalty to the rich and callousness toward the suffering of the poor in this state was clear back then, at least we knew that our Legislature, by passing a budget some of whose programs were intended to alleviate some of that suffering, was not so callous. What has happened in the meantime, that no voices have been raised at the Capitol about the source of the supposed surplus revenue? Why are none of our legislators speaking up about this double-steal, taking only from the poor to give only to the rich?

ADC families in Iowa are living at a level which is only 44% of the federal poverty line. Medicaid is available to only a fraction of the poor in the state, leaving the rest to hope for the best. One in six Iowa children lives below the poverty line. And while the population of the state is dropping, the numbers of the poor steadily rise.

Even if the question is taxes, it is not the rich who need a break in this state. While taxes paid by the wealthy in Iowa rank 22nd in the nation, those paid by the poor rank second. Citizens for Tax Justice named Iowa among the "Filthy Fifteen" for its tax policies toward the poor.

The Legislature's cooperation with Branstad's plan for tax relief for the rich is a victory of expedience over morality. It will be a sad day for this state when this obscene plan goes through.



Photo taken at July 1st rally against budget cuts

Summary of human needs problems in Iowa is taken from KEY PROBLEMS IN HUMAN NEEDS -- WHAT THE FACTS SHOW FOR IOWA A Sourcebook on Human Needs in Iowa, compiled in Sept., 1987 by the Human Needs Advocates.



Photo taken at July 1st rally against budget cuts

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY --

KEY PROBLEMS IN HUMAN NEEDS --

WHAT THE FACTS SHOW FOR IOWA

1. The number of children living below the poverty level in Iowa is increasing while the number of children is declining. Between 1969 and 1985, the number of children living in Iowa declined by 22.6 % while the number of children living in families below the poverty level increased by 33.2 %. One in six Iowa children now lives below the poverty level.
2. Iowa ADC payment levels have not kept pace with inflation, and have fallen dramatically over the last decade and now are only 44 % of the federal poverty level. ADC benefits for most ADC families have been raised only twice in the last nine years, and the state's overall spending on ADC has declined relative to other parts of the state budget. The purchasing power of an ADC grant is one-third less today than it was a decade ago, and ten percent less than it was in 1983.
3. Iowa's purchase-of-service reimbursements to agencies and individuals providing services to children have deteriorated badly and caused major difficulties for purchase-of-service providers. Foster parents, residential treatment programs, child care facilities, and residential care programs have lost an average of 10 % to inflation in terms of state reimbursements over the last five years.
4. Iowa's purchase-of-service providers largely rely upon state reimbursements to pay their staff costs. Currently, salaries provided by private agencies with purchase-of-service contracts are substantially below those paid by the state to state employees doing similar jobs; and for foster children, Iowa's reimbursements to foster parents are well below those for neighboring states.
5. Iowa provides very little in the form of child care subsidies, much less than its surrounding states. Iowa spends only \$.55 per capita on child care subsidies, compared with an average of \$ 2.42 per capita by neighboring states.
6. Iowa's individual income tax burden is extremely heavy on low and moderate income families. One reason Iowa was named by the Citizens for Tax Justice as one of the "Filthy Fifteen" states for its tax policies on the poor. At \$ 358 per year for a family of four living at the poverty level (\$12,090), Iowa's income tax is over \$ 150 higher than any neighboring state, and is second highest in the country.
7. While other states have made commitments to improve services for the mentally retarded and mentally ill, Iowa has yet to begin to implement the "bill of rights" for these populations. Legislative initiatives to provide emergency support and longer term housing for the homeless, to provide increased medical coverage for pregnant women and children, and to provide legal assistance and mediation support for low-income persons were vetoed by the Governor. Iowa lags behind many other states in developing and funding programs to address the needs of special populations of its citizens.



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and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.
The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall
eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's
meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain,
saith the Lord.
Isaiah 65: 24-5